

## 348 The United States Naval Academy

The one living survivor of the old Naval School who still remains at his ancient post is John Jarvis, drummer and mail-carrier. Far back in the "forties," he was in the Marine Band at Washington; and then he went slaver-catching on the African coast in the *Marion*; and just about fifty years ago, when the white-haired old admirals on the retired list were rollicking reefers fretting under Lockwood's drill, Jarvis began to beat the drum to keep their marching footsteps in time. He kept on beating it for drills and dinners and reveillé and tattoo and quarters year in and year out, until the Academy migrated to Newport, and then he became the mail-carrier, and the youngsters always joyfully welcomed him as the bearer of news from home. That office was so congenial to him that about a generation ago he hung up his drum forever, and yielded his place to the bugler. He kept on getting the letters, and he is at it yet. Some of these days when he gets old—which is still, of course, a long time distant—perhaps the powers that be will make proper provision for his pleasant and honorable retirement, with the substantial reward which he has so well earned.

The Naval Academy has granted diplomas of three different designs. The first, which was originally given at the end of the four-years course, was devised by the Professor of Drawing, Mr. Edward Seager, and bears the representation of the old sloop-of-war *Preble*, Stribling Row, and the recitation building. This was signed originally by the entire Academic Board. In Admiral Porter's time, this design was abandoned, and another substituted showing simply a steam frigate of the type then in vogue, and the document was signed solely by

## Latter-Day History

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the Superintendent. Still later, this was abolished in favor of a somewhat complicated testimonial, whereon were represented various mythological deities and animals. At the present time, diploma No. 3, with wording suitably changed, is given to the cadet as a certificate of proficiency when he completes the four-year course. Diploma No. 2 is not used. Diploma No. 1 is now the diploma proper, and is bestowed upon the graduates after they have finished their two years' sea service.

The seal or coat-of-arms of the Naval Academy has for its crest a hand grasping a trident, below which is a shield bearing an ancient galley coming into action, bows on, and below that an open book, indicative of education, and finally bears the motto, "*Ex Scientia Tridens*" (From knowledge, the sea power). The whole is the design of the author, and was adopted by the Navy Department in 1898. Up to that year, the Naval Academy had possessed no authorized device, although it had printed on its Registers an arbitrary symbol. The occasion which led to the adoption of the present design was the building of a new club-house by the University Club of New York, on the exterior of which the coats-of-arms of the several colleges were placed as an embellishment, and this brought the fact to general notice that the Naval Academy had no badge of the kind. The matter was at once taken up by Mr. Jacob W. Miller, of the class of 1867, and mainly through his endeavors the desired approval of the Navy Department was secured.

PRESTON'S OFFICE, N.Y.  
RECEIVED & MAILED

APR 21 1934

MS. \_\_\_\_\_  
SUBJECTS \_\_\_\_\_  
SERIES \_\_\_\_\_

12041608-DVC

21 April 1934

OBH/P11-(50)

Dear Sir:

Referring to your letter of 19 April, I regret that nothing very definite is known regarding the history of the diploma now in use at the Naval Academy.

However, it is believed that it was designed by a Mr. Marshal Oliver, while he was an Assistant Professor of Drawing at the Naval Academy; that it was adopted and used for the first time in June 1870; that the various figures on the diploma are for the most part symbolical, and that the original supply of diplomas was made by the firm of Randall, Wright, Hatch and Edson, Bank Note Engravers, 48 Merchants Exchange, New York, New York.

The same general design has been in use since 1870, as above noted, although the wording has been slightly changed. In 1925 a new plate was purchased from the E. A. Wright and Company, Broad and Huntingdon Streets, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Very truly yours,

A. H. Rocks,  
Lieutenant Commander, U. S. Navy,  
Secretary, Academic Board.

Mr. Joseph Kastner,  
FORTUNE,  
135 East 42nd Street,  
New York, New York.

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UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY

Annapolis, Maryland

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND HISTORY

24 June, 1936

Chubb/KU-1 (S. V. M.)

From: Head of Department of English and History  
To: The Superintendent

Subject: Naval Academy Diploma

Inclosures: (A) Diploma of the Naval Academy in present use  
(B) Certificate of Naval Academy conferring B.S. degree  
(C) Diploma, Harvard University, conferring B.S. degree (sample)  
(D) Diploma, Harvard University, conferring B.S. in Engineering (sample)  
(E) Transcript of diploma, Yale University, conferring B.A. degree  
(F) Transcript of diploma, Yale University, conferring B.S. degree  
(G) Transcript of diploma, Mass. Institute of Technology, conferring B.S. degree  
(H) Transcript of diploma, The Johns Hopkins University, conferring B.A. degree  
(I) Diploma, University of Chicago conferring B.S. degree (sample)  
(J) Diploma, University of California conferring B.S. degree (sample)  
(K) Form submitted for Naval Academy Diploma

1. In accordance with instructions I have studied the form of the Naval Academy diploma, and have compared this with the diplomas of Harvard, Yale, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Hopkins, Chicago, and California (inclosures C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J).

2. The following criticisms of the Naval Academy diploma are submitted:

- (a) Inexactness in wording: "Midshipman \_\_\_\_\_ . . . having passed the required examination before the Academic Board. . ." - the custom of midshipmen appearing individually before the Academic Board for a final examination belongs to the remote past.
- (b) Incompleteness in wording: Although the date of the diploma is given most punctiliously, there is no statement of place.
- (c) Unnecessary number of signatures: Thirteen signatures seems to be an unnecessary degree of certification. The signatures of the Superintendent and the Secretary of the Academy Board are all that are required.
- (d) Inartistic symbolic figures: The diploma is heavily ornamented by symbolic figures, which are not good art, and many of them

mean little or nothing. In my opinion it would be improved by their omission.

3. I recommend the revision of the Naval Academy diploma and I submit a form designed to meet our needs (inclosure K).

  
Carroll S. Alden



UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY

Annapolis, Maryland

File No.

Serial

8 February 1945

To: Supply Officer.

Subj: Diplomas presented to midshipmen on graduation.

Ref: Telephone inquiry of February 7.

1. From a study of correspondence in the Superintendent's Office it was learned that the diploma now presented to Naval Academy graduates was used for the first time in June 1870. Its designer was Professor Marshall Oliver, at that time a Professor of Drawing at the Naval Academy. Professor Oliver was considered an artist of some talent and was studying art in Paris in 1860. Later he became an actor and played with Edwin Booth in Riche-lieu. He was Librarian of the Naval Academy, 1895-1899, and died in 1900. A diploma of the same general design has been used at the Naval Academy since 1870.

2. At various times protests have been made concerning its artistic merit or lack of merit. In 1936 the Head of the Department of English, History and Government in a letter to the Superintendent stated that the various figures incorporated in its design "mean little or nothing."

3. Mr. Park Benjamin in his The United States Naval Academy, p. 348-349, stated: "The Naval Academy has granted diplomas of three different designs. The first, which was originally given at the end of the four-years' course, was devised by the Professor of Drawing, Mr. Edward Seager, and bears the representation of the old sloop-of-war Preble, Stribling Row, and the recitation building. This was signed originally by the entire Academic Board. In Admiral Porter's time (1866) this design was abandoned, and another substituted showing simply a steam frigate of the type then in vogue, and the document was signed solely by the Superintendent. (This diploma brought a voluble protest from a letter-writer in the Army and Navy Journal, March 16, 1870, p. 474, L.H.B.) Still later, this was abolished in favor of a somewhat more complicated testimonial (the present one) whereon were represented various mythological deities and animals. At the present time, diploma No. 3, with wording suitably changed, is given to the cadet as a certificate of proficiency when he completes the four-year course. Diploma No. 2 is not used.

8 February 1945

To: Supply Officer.

Diploma No. 1 is now the diploma proper, and is bestowed upon the graduates after they have finished their two years' sea service." Benjamin wrote the above in 1899. His statement in the last sentence has now no significance.

4. A careful search has been made through the correspondence in the Superintendent's Office and through the files of the Army and Navy Journal near the period when the present diploma was first given to the graduates but no explanation of the various mythological characters depicted has been disclosed. The presence of Neptune and his trident can be readily understood as well as the midshipman and his sextant. I can find no particular meaning attached to the other figures depicted. The diploma seems to have been conceived with little taste and appears quite meaningless.

*Louis H. Bolander*  
Louis H. Bolander  
Associate Librarian

UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY

Annapolis, Maryland

File No. NC2

Serial 238255

C  
O  
P  
Y

18 April 1946

To: Chief of Naval Personnel.

Subj: Request for assistance in the preparation of a suitable design for diploma for Naval Academy graduates.

1. The Superintendent is of the opinion that the present design of the diploma given to graduates of the Naval Academy is in many respects obsolete and that certain features of the design have completely lost their significance. It is therefore requested that the Bureau of Ships and the Bureau of Yards & Docks render assistance in the preparation of a design for a more appropriate diploma. It is the Superintendent's thought that some of the design artists employed by these Bureaus might be utilized for this purpose.
2. The matter of a new diploma design was submitted to the midshipmen now at the Naval Academy but unfortunately the number of midshipmen with special aptitude in this field is limited and no acceptable design has been submitted. However, the nearest approach to an acceptable design is being forwarded under separate cover and it is believed that such simplicity is in order. Because of the difficulty being experienced in obtaining suitable parchments of the present size the Superintendent is not averse to the consideration of a diploma slightly smaller in size. In this connection, a copy of the present diploma is enclosed. It is also considered that a design which employs an outline of the seal of the U. S. Naval Academy and a symbolic sea scene along the lines of that embodied in the sample proposed design will be in good taste.
3. Such assistance as may be possible in connection with this matter will be greatly appreciated and if practicable the Superintendent would like to have the opportunity to consider a number of proposed designs.

By direction of the Superintendent U. S. Naval Academy.

R. S. CRAIGHILL  
Secretary Academic Board



Chief of Staff
Asst. Ch. of Staff
SAB
Flag Lt.
Flag Sec'y
P.O.
Admin
Legal Registrar
Comp. Comm. Off.
Admissions
Asst. SAB
Security & Plans
Man'g't. Eng.
Prov. Marshal
Off. Pers.
Comdt. Midn.
S&N
O&G
ME
Avia
Com. Av. Off.
Math
EE
EH&G
For. Affs.
Phys. Ed.
Dir. Ath.
S.M.O.
Hygiene
Dental
I.R.O.
P.W.O.
D.P.W.O.
Supply
Chaplain
NEES
Dir. N.A. Museum
N.A.F.
NavSta
Radio Sta.

289572

28 May 1958

C 2/115/1-12

From: Superintendent, U. S. Naval Academy  
To: Chief of Naval Operations  
Via: Chief of Naval Personnel

Subj: United States Naval Academy Diploma

Encl: (1) New Design of the U. S. Naval Academy Diploma  
(2) [unclear]

1. The design of the current diploma is the third that has been used at the Naval Academy. Overtures to change it have been made periodically since 1900, but final action has never been taken -- a primary reason being that agreement could not be reached as to what the replacement design should be. There has been general agreement in the following criticisms of the current diploma:

- Inexactness in wording: "Midshipman \_\_\_\_\_ having passed the required examination before the Academic Board. . ." -- the custom of midshipmen appearing individually before the Academic Board for a final examination belongs to the remote past.
- Incompleteness in wording: Although the date of the diploma is given most punctiliously, there is no statement of place.
- Unnecessary number of signatures: Thirteen signatures seem to be an unnecessary degree of certification. The signatures of the Superintendent and the Secretary of the Academic Board are all that are required.
- Inartistic symbolic figures: The diploma is heavily ornamented by symbolic figures, which are not good art, and many of them mean little or nothing. The various mythological deities and animals create an unbecoming appearance.
- Undesirably large: It is approximately four times as large as the diplomas awarded by the great majority of colleges and universities in the United States. When framed it is usually greatly out of proportion to the other appointments in the room where it may be hung.
- Deteriorates with age: Sheepskin will warp, discolor and deteriorate with age. The parchment used in Enclosure (1) will remain in excellent condition for centuries after the sheepskin has deteriorated.

2. The Academic Board of the Naval Academy has recently voted unanimously to discontinue use of the present diploma after this year, and to adopt Enclosure (1) as its official diploma beginning with the class which will graduate in June 1959. The new diploma is the exact size of the commission. It is intended that they both be presented to the midshipmen on graduation on the inner sides of a blue leather folder which will have on the outside cover in gold the seal of the Naval Academy and the midshipman's name. The diploma and commission can be readily displayed by simply opening the folder and standing it in the desired location.

3. The central Naval Academy seal with Bancroft Hall and the Chapel in the background -- which may be considered symbolic of the "Commission Visible" and the "Commission Invisible" -- presents in my opinion an immutable emblem that the graduate will cherish more and more with the passage of time.

W. R. SMEDBERG, III

P.S. The estimate actual money saved by the adoption of the new diploma will be about \$2000 each year.

/s/ W. R. Smedberg, III

(Prepared by Captain William R. Smedberg, 5/2/58)